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ABSTRACT

The absence of a meaningful conception of Negro culture has forced the interpretation of almost all psychology's data on the Negro into two seemingly dichotomous categories: either that of biological incapacity, i.e., genetic inferiority, or social deviance and pathology, i.e., environmental deprivation. The cultural difference theory asserts that the statistical differences noted by psychologists in intelligence testing, in family and social organization, and in attitude studies of the Negro community are surface manifestations of the viable, structured culture of the Negro American. Acquisition of new cultural patterns cannot occur without recognition of and respect for existing cultural patterns. The failure of psychology to recognize a distinct black culture has four main sources: the basic ethnocentrism of psychology, the socio-political myths surrounding our conception of assimilation, ignorance concerning the fundamental notion of culture, and embarrassment of the black middle class and the white liberal to deal with culturally rooted behavioral differences. (JM)

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THE SOCIAL PATHOLOGY MODEL: HISTORICAL BASES FOR PSYCHOLOGY'S DENIAL OF THE EXISTENCE OF NEGRO CULTURE

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Introduction

This paper is one of a series by the present authors seeking to portray the ethnocentrism of the social sciences in studies dealing with the Negro. It is a modest attempt to reorient the current demand for relevance in our profession back to the assumptive bases of psychology, to the work we do, and to the social policy that is suggested by that work.

We will not suggest here that our prime responsibilities as psychologists is direct social action, but rather that pscyhology's pressing task is to critically reexamine and reevaluate our scholarly work. We leave the responsibility of social action to individuals. We will concentrate the present discussion on the need for an extensive re-evaluation of how psychology has and has not dealt with Negro behavior and culture. The goal is to produce a revolution of ideas rather than to attempt a revolution of direct action which fails because it is based on old and tired ideas. It is our humble belief that a revolution of ideas is a more potent force for the production of social change by social scientists than any other mode of intervention currently available to us as scholars and scientists. It is, we believe, an infinitesimal beginning of the much discussed, but little thought through, New Psychology.

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We choose to concentrate on the bases for denial of Negro culture for we feel that ignorance of this culture has produced a much more distorted and inaccurate view of the Negro than most of us would have previously supposed. We believe that the absence of a meaningful conception of Negro culture has forced the interpretation of almost all psychology's data on the Negro into two seemingly dichotomous categories--either that of biological incapacity (genetic inferiority) or social deviance and pathology (environmental deprivation).

We have offered elsewhere (Baratz and Baratz, 1968) a third category based upon the culture of the Afro-American in the United States (cultural difference) and seek in the present paper to explore the reasons why psychology has never given credence to this concept as a device for hypothesis development and research design.

Briefly stated, the cultural difference theory asserts that the statistical differences noted by psychologists in intelligence testing, in family and social organization,and in attitude studies of the Negro community are not the result of pathology, faulty learning or genetic inferiority. These differences are surface manifestations of the viable, structured culture of the Negro American. A culture which is a synthesis of African culture in contact with American European culture under slavery. Such a model does not postulate that the existence of a distinct culture precludes the addition of other cultures. Biculturalism is indeed possible as is bilingualism. However, it does insist that acquisition of new cultural patterns cannot occur without recognition and respect for existing cultural patterns.

Psychology and Negro Culture

Although the pscyhologist has long recognized that behavior is essentially the result of biological, sociological and cultural factors, there is little mention of the Negro culture as an explanation of Negro behavior except when "culture" is used in a distorted and negative sense--thus the culture of poverty becomes the focus rather than Negro ethnicity. Despite the fact that Negro behavior has its roots in an African, non-European tradition, psychologists have persisted in viewing Negroes as black Europeans. Why is it that psychologists have failed to recognize a distinct black culture?

This failure derives predominantly from four sources:

1. the basic ethnocentrism of psychology
2. the socio-political myths surrounding our conception of assimilation
3. ignorance concerning the fundamental notion of culture, and
4. embarrassment of the black middle class and the white liberal to deal with culturally rooted behavioral differences.

The basic ethnocentrism of psychology.

Since the fundamental psychological model is normativistic, it sets up a criterion of behavior against which individuals and groups are measured. The ethnocentrism stems from the fact that psychologists often attempt to assess behavior using a criterion assumed to be universal to our society when in fact that criterion is merely one cultural manifestation of the universal human behavior.

The psychological literature concerning the language behavior of Negroes is a case in point. Psychologists are correct in assuming that language is a universal human characteristic. Linguists have

yet to find a human society--no matter how non-technological, no matter how poor and impoverished--whose inhabitants did not use a highly structured, well formed grammatical system for communication. It is taken as axiomatic by linguists that all humans develop language except in those rare individual cases where severe physical and/or psychological traumas occur. Linguists have also learned that within a large complex society where individuals from different social classes and different ethnicities live in close proximity, they often speak many varieties (dialects) of the same language. One of these dialects may be considered socially more prestigious than the others. It, thus, may be used as the standard for the nation. Although one dialect may be chosen as the standard language, it is important to realize that this is an arbitrary, or at most, social decision which has nothing to do with that particular dialect's linguistic merits. That is to say, the dialect chosen as standard is no more highly structured, well formed or grammatical than any of the other dialects. The evolution of a particular dialect as the standard is due to socio-political considerations rather than to intrinsic linguistic superiority. Some psychologists, however, have failed to consider the existence of these language variations and have thus mistakenly equated a single surface manifestation of the universal behavior, that is the development of the standard dialect, with the universal itself, that is the development of language. The refusal to grant legitimacy to Negro dialect by psychologists is a clear cut example of psychology's ethnocentrism. At present, we find an entire body of psychological literature which alleges to assess the language development of Negro children but nevertheless,

uses as a criterion for language development the acquisition of standard English--a dialect of the English language that the majority of the Negro children in this country are not developing as their native dialect. (Deutsch, 1964; John, 1963; Stern, 1969; Hurst,1965). Since these psychologists use standard English as the criterion, they wrongly view the child's linguistic system as underdeveloped, and filled with errors. He becomes in the psychological research verbally defective and conceptually impaired. Such research fails to recognize that the child has a system which is fully developed, highly structured, but different grammatically from that of the standard English criterion. (Baratz,J., 1969)

The language system is but one instance of the pscyhologist's ethnocentrism in dealing with Negro behavior. One can find and document similar instances in the pscyhological literature dealing with family patterns, interaction styles, belief systems and test construction.

From psychology's ethnocentric position, and without an adequate conception of Negro culture the profession has tended to view behavioral differences such as Non-standard Negro English not as signs of a different cultural system but as defects and deviances from our falsely hypothesized pan-cultural norm. A culture of Poverty model is not appropriate here because differences observed in such a model are always interpreted not as legitimate manifestations of a viable culture, but as an unfortunate pathological reaction to being poor. The culture of poverty interpretation as an insufficient interpretation for linguistic data has been adequately dealt with by Stewart (1969).

In his criticism of the culture of Poverty model Stewart illustrates that this model cannot deal with the linguistic fact that structurally different linguistic systems are found among different ethnic groups supposedly exposed to the same poverty culture.

The ethnocentrism in psychology which sets up norms and declares differences from those norms to be deviances, and which tends to confuse unique manifestations of a universal behavior for the universal itself, is not, however, the only reason why psychologists have tended to ignore the contribution of Negro culture to the understanding of Negro behavior.

<u>The socio-political myths surrounding our concepts of cultural assimilation</u>.

Three particular American socio-political beliefs have contributed greatly to the psychologist's denial of the Negro culture (and, indeed, that of other white ethnic groups). The first involves the melting pot myth and a confusion over the concept of egalitarianism, the second concerns the fact that it was the racists, with their theory of genetic inferiority who used culturally rooted behavioral differences to support their erroneous theory, and the third involves the distortions of Negro cultural history under slavery which gave rise to what Herskovits so aptly described as the "Myth of the Negro past."

A. The Melting Pot Myth and the Confusion over the concept of Egalitarianism

The basic doctrine that "all men are created equal" has been misinterpreted by egalitarians to read "all men are created equal if they behave in the same manner." This confusion of egalitarianism

with behavioral and cultural conformity has been supported by one of the basic components of the American Dream--the "melting pot myth". According to this myth, America is the "melting pot" society where peoples from diverse cultures came together and created the American culture which is distinct from the individual cultures that contributed to it. American society then, according to the melting pot analogy, is said to be the result of the elimination of the impurities, along with the blending of the best elements of those diverse cultures.

It is interesting to note that until recently there has been little discussion of the contribution of African culture to the American mainstream. This is no doubt due to the supposition on the one hand that American Negroes had no culture, and the assumption on the other hand that the different behaviors that they exhibited were the epitome of the impurities which the melting pot would eliminate. As a result, those aspects of the mainstream system which Negroes share in common with whites have been assumed to be derived from white behavior rather than the result of African contribution to the melting pot. The white southerner is particularly proud of his "southern hospitality". Herskovits (1941), however, has noted that certain aspects of the politeness behavior in the South appears to have no antecendent in European cultures but rather can be traced to African patterns of interaction. Again, Dalby (1967) a West African specialist, has pointed out that "uh huh" and "uh uh" which formerly were assumed to be the result of the typical informal American Way actually appear to be derived from several African

languages where "uh huh" is the word for "yes", and "uh uh" is the word for "no" (the verbal conditioning researchers have yet to acknowledge this contribution!).

The melting pot myth not only assumed a distinct American culture derived from but not retaining various ethnic styles, but also presumed that the acculturation to the American Way occurred by virtue of one's mere residence on American soil. That is, any second generation American automatically acculturated into the mainstream of American society. From this a peculiar logic evolved which assumed that to speak of the retention of ethnic differences in behavior was to be "un-American" in so far as any such discussion would contradict the American dream. In addition, it would indicate that the "impurities" of one's distinct ethnic identity could not be eliminated simply by living in America, the melting pot. This faulty, but nonetheless prevalent logic, then postulates that (1) since America is indeed the melting pot, and (2) since the melting pot eliminates all cultural impurities, that (3) then the residue of distinct ethnic behavior that is retained over several generations of living in America must represent the genetic element of behavior. Since the Afro-American has been in this country since the early 17th century, this poor logic concludes that to say the Negro behaves differently from whites due to cultural retention of African patterns is comparable to calling him genetically inferior.

This faulty logic, coupled with the fact that racists used the behavioral differences that they observed between Negroes and whites

to "prove" the innate inferiority of Negroes and to justify slavery, has made it extremely uncomfortable for social scientists to give credence to and explore the behavioral differences between ethnic groups. The difficulty here is that in rejecting the racists' theory about Negro behavior the psychologist also rejected the behavior itself. It is the general thesis of the cultural difference model that the intolerance of ethnic behavioral differences, not their existence, is what constitutes racism (Baratz and Baratz, 1970).

B. Racist descriptions of Negro behavior and their interpretation of those behaviors

The genetic racists did for the most part live in close proximity with the Negro community; they had ample opportunity to study and describe Negro behavior. The behavior described by the racists was not contrived by perverse minds. The bigot did not have to invent his data--it was there; it abounds--many Negroes, for example, do roll their eyes, do perform a little dance when they laugh; do speak a distinct dialect, do establish extended family kinship systems, and do dress differently. What the bigot did, because he like today's social scientists was unaware of the role of culture in determining behavior, was to "invent" a theory of racial inferiority to explain the differences. Thus, Ambrose Gonzales, a white racist and a fluent speaker of the Negro dialect, Gullah, wrote Negro folk tales down in grammatically accurate Gullah but then erroneously described blacks who spoke this creolized dialect as using "slovenly and careless speech." (Gonzales, 1922, p. 10) In spite of his accurate recording of the dialect he concluded, because of his naivete about language and his need to explain the

differences, that the grammatical differences he observed between standard English and Gullah were due to the "characteristic laziness" of the Negro rather than to the existence of the distinct grammatical system he so aptly recorded.

We have pointed out elsewhere (Baratz and Baratz, 1970) that the pathology riddled conceptualization of Negro dialect as given by the racists (despite their accurate recording of that dialect) agrees in many ways with the conceptualization of that language given by contemporary egalitarian psychologists such as Hunt (1968) and Deutsch (1965)--only the explanation of how he got that way (substitute "inadequate mothering" for "characteristic laziness") is different. One may, therefore, accept the accuracy of the dialect recording (the raw data) but not accept the explanation and conceptualization of that data.

However, even when this is done, and the existence of these differences acknowledged, some social scientists have protested the over-riding preoccupation of the difference theory with the description of cultural differences. They assert that too much time is spent describing the differences between Negroes and whites rather than focusing on their similarities. To this we must clearly assert, as Hannerz (1969) and Erickson (1969) already have, that it is precisely the differences in cultural behaviors that interfere with the development of true biculturalism in the Negro American. Further, it is the misreading and misunderstanding of those differences which interfere in our everyday interactions with Negroes and which communicate to the Black man our basic ethnocentrism and racism.

Nonetheless, perhaps the greatest reason for psychologists' tendency to dismiss the racist's data was not simply that it was tied to an abhorent theory of genetic inferiority, but more importantly, because the science of psychology had not developed the methodologies to describe culturally different microbehaviors and to assess the effect of those microbehaviors on interpersonal contacts. Thus, psychology could only equate the observation of the culturally different behaviors described by the racists with the stereotypic expression of prejudice. While it cannot be denied that use of the term prejudice is appropriate in this instance since the interpretation of the behaviors by the racist led to a conception of inferiority; it is interesting to note that the negative concept "stereotype" is the only way that psychology has developed to deal with culturally linked microbehaviors. These behaviors are vastly important for they are learned early in the child's life and are often out of awareness and most subtle. They appear to be strong evidence for the ethnic identification of the New World Afro-American with his African brother.

C. The "myth of the Negro past"

The acceptance of the "melting pot myth" and the rejection of the "genetic inferiority myth" are not however the only reasons for psychology's failure to recognize and discuss behavioral differences between whites and Negroes, and indeed, among the various white ethnic groups that constitute American mainstream society. There is one other prevalent American myth which has allowed the behavioral sciences to ignore the role of culture in maintaining

distinctive Negro behavioral patterns. Herskovits (1941) has aptly labelled this the "myth of the Negro past." Briefly stated, the myth of the Negro past asserts that the naivete of social scientists concerning the processes of acculturation have led them to assume that the Negro lost all of his characteristic African behaviors merely because he forcibly left Africa and resided on American soil for several generations in slavery. Such a myth invariably leads to explaining Negro behavior as pathological due to oppression. Such a myth can only be perpetuated in the absence of significant inputs from ethnohistorians and microbehaviorists.

Ignorance concerning the fundamental notion of culture.

It is this myth of the Negro past coupled with ignorance concerning the cultural process which led Glazer and Moynihan (1963) naively to assert that "The Negro is only an American and nothing else. He has no values and culture to guard and protect." Because the psychologist and the sociologist did not understand the acculturative process whereby a distinct cultural form becomes transmuted within the acculturation process, they assumed that, for example, since Afro-Americans no longer spoke African languages, no longer used African ritual in marriage ceremonies, no longer wore African dress, that they therefore retained no cultural distinctiveness. This assumption left the social scientists with no other alternative than to wrongly describe the creolized Negro dialect used by the Afro-American as "poorly learned English," the matrifocal family unit so prevalent in the lower class Negro society as "evidence of

male emasculation", the extended kinship systems as "disorganized families," and the clothing choices as "poor taste."

While it is true that Afro-Americans are not native speakers of the African languages of their forebears, it is nontheless the case that the dialect of English which many Negroes speak includes many forms that are substantially similar in structure to the African languages of their forebears. (Stewart, 1968)

As Hannerz (1969) has pointed out in regard to interpreting family forms of black Americans "while specific marriages were broken up [by enslavement] the conscious models of and for marriage could well remain and influence the form of union adopted under new circumstances [during slavery]." Adaptation of new forms are always influenced by existing forms, they do not occur in a "cultural vacuum."

Perhaps the best example of how existing cultural patterns effect the adaptation of new forms is in examining how the Afro-American culture in the United States has dealt with efforts to infuse African styles into the creolized culture. The "black is beautiful" emphasis in Black rhetoric has not simply transfered African hairstyles to the Negro American community, but rather has modified them in accordance with certain distinctively New World Afro-American cultural values: namely, that the female should have longer hair than the male. Thus, one finds the adaptation of the African bush by Afro-American girls but with the Americanized aspect of having large, "long hair" bushes as opposed to the typical close-cut bush of African women. Again, we find that Afro-American women, rather than taking up the dressing styles of African women,

have instead modified the African male costume--the dashiki--to suit American female dressing patterns. The addition of Granny glasses and turtle necks only add to the phenomena described.

It is important for psychologists to understand some of the basic concepts of the anthropologist in terms of dealing with distinct cultures and the acculturative process. A fundamental anthropological concept is that of "cultural relativity". The anthropologist approaches his description of cultural differences within a framework of linear rather than hierarchical perspective. Matrifocal, patrifocal, monogamous, and polygamous societies are merely evidences of the various social structures that groups evolve. One is intrinsically no more valuable a structural ordering than the next.

In addition as Herskovits and Bascom (1959) have pointed out:

> [It is culture rather than social institutions that] distinguishes man from the rest of the biological world. Other animals, and insects as well, have societies, but only man uses language, manufactures tools, and possesses art, religion and other aspects of culture. The concern with culture, rather than with society and social institutions thus emphasizes the specifically human elements of man's behavior." (p. 1)
>
> Culture varies from group to group and from one period of time to another within any single group. From this follows a principle of fundamental scientific importance and of equal practical significance: what has been learned can be modified through further learning; habits, customs, beliefs, social structures, and institutions can change. (p. 2)

A perspective that views the Afro-American distinct behavioral patterns through this type of cultural framework recognizes that those patterns that exist today are not merely the result of oppression but rather the product of the interaction of distinctly African cultures with the slavery and post emancipation American society.

In fact, perhaps it is the very strengths of the African culture which allowed for successful adaptation and survival of the African under slavery both in Africa and in the New World.

Psychologists have not only been ignorant of the fundamental notion of culture differences as used by anthropologists but have also confounded the issue by adding a notion of cultural difference which has little relation to that of the anthropologist. Thus, statistically significant differences on standardized tasks between Negroes and whites are what most psychologists assume to be cultural differences. The uniformly lower scores of Negro children on IQ tests are not, however, cultural differences in the anthropological sense. These scores when viewed by the anthropologists are merely a manifestation of the actual cultural differences--the dialect, rhetorical style, epistemology and response styles of the distinctive Negro culture.

For the psychologist the difference is in terms of his alleged universalistic norm. For the anthropologist, the difference is tied to the varying ways in which man has chosen to define his world. As we have indicated elsewhere (Baratz, S., 1968), IQ scores of Negro children when viewed within an anthropological frame actually indicate the degree to which they have bought into, or learned the mainstream culture; they do not indicate the potential of Negro children for buying into the system, as is the interpretation given to such scores by the psychologist.

Thus, from the perspective advanced here IQ tests, as presently formulated, are inadequate measures of Negro intellectual potential since they are not culture specific. Construction of culture specific

tests of IQ are not extraordinary tasks for psychologists. The Binet test originally in French was translated into standard English and modified in accordance with the mainstream American culture. The resulting Stanford-Binet was then re-translated for language and culture differences for use in England. Why then do we not have such a translation for use with Afro-Americans? It is the absence of a meaningful conception of Negro culture and as Dillard (1969) has pointed out, it is the assumption that Negroes speak a defective English rather than a distinctive dialect which has led most psychologists to assume that IQ tests such as the Stanford-Binet could be used on Negro populations without fear of marked cultural bias. Such a translation is urgently needed and is indeed a priority item for the New Psychology.

Embarrassment of the black middle class and the white liberal to deal with behavioral differences.

The ready availability of a deficit model and its half-sister the culture of poverty model; the belief in certain of the socio-political myths of the country, and a naive view of culture were not the only reason that psychologists used for not dealing with behavioral differences. There has been a "politeness conspiracy" about not talking of behavioral differences even when they are most apparent. Since these differences have been viewed as pejorative and deviant by most psychologists, to discuss them in great detail was assumed to be rude and tantamount to discussing a hunchback's hump with him.

Another more pressing reason why both middle class blacks and liberal whites have been reluctant to discuss these differences is fear that such discussions will be used maliciously by racists to support their theories of Negro inferiority. The difficulty here is two fold: (1) not talking about the differences does nothing to make them disappear, and (2) not recognizing the distinctive behaviors within a cultural model leaves the liberal with only one alternative that of calling the American Negro a sick white man--sick in the social rather than genetic sense.

It is precisely this latter train of thinking that the black militants use when discussing the racism in social science. We have elsewhere indicated the legitimacy of the claim of ethnocentrism of the social sciences by blacks (Baratz, 1968), however, the demands by black rhetoricians that research no longer be done on the Negro by white social scientists is not an adequate solution to the problems presented. We make this assertion because the absence of insightful views of the ghetto by anthropologists, and the overriding deficit orientation of previous research has coincided with t the extreme demands of identity denial in the process of integration. These factors in combination have produced in most cases, professional black social scientists who have little conception of Negro culture outside of the culture of poverty model. Integration, as built into our society and conceptualized by the psychological contact hypothesis of Allport (1954), Pettigrew (1964), and Cook (1957), demand denial of most of the distinctively black behaviors in order to make it in the white society. Those blacks who have made it, who have learned to censure distinctive cultural behaviors as the price

of integration have had a stake in disaffiliating themselves from the culture and in denying the legitimacy of these very obvious culturally related behaviors. Indeed, the price of integration for the upwardly mobile Negro has been continuous tension and anxiety lest distinctively black behavior seep through. The circle here is closed once one realizes that most of the current black rhetoricians in the social sciences are seeking ways to regain their affiliations with the community they themselves rejected as a result of this process. Further, one must recognize that this attempt is no small task, for the professional skills that blacks have to offer their brothers are often no more than those characteristic of the deficit model. One need only examine Cobb's and Grier's book, Black Rage, or Green's comments on Negro dialect to realize how easy it is for even the most angry militants to fall into the trap of the deficit model.

In a rather frank and open admission Green, Co-chairman of the Association of Black Psychologists, indicates his frustrating work with youngsters in Oakland: "I found that much of the slang terminology was rather incomprehensible to me". (Green, 1965) It is quite clear that Green saw the dialect system not as a well structured and lawful system but as an inadequate and sub-standard form of standard English very much as that described by Martin Deutsch and Vera John:

> The very inadequate speech that is used in the home is also used in the neighborhood, in the play group, and in the classroom. Since these poor English patterns are reconstructed constantly by the associations that these young people have, the school has to play a strong role in bringing about a change in order that these young people can communicate more adequately in our society. (Green, 1964, p. 123)

The middle class Negro no less than others has been concerned with stereotypes and not cultural differences. He has been the one who at the cultural crossroads has borne the brunt of white misreading of black behavior, and it is he who has the identity crisis in the Negro community. Taking all of the above together it is no wonder that discussions of the existence of Negro cultural differences such as Negro dialect will meet with suspicion of racism, and denial of its existence, and an insistence on it's pathology by most middle class blacks. But one must bear in mind that it is only with the recognition of a culturally different system that we can hope for bi-culturalism, where the Negro can learn the white cultural system without having to reject his own system and in so doing, himself. In recognizing a distinct cultural system, we also realize how much whites can learn from the black culture. Bi-culturalism is a two way street.

The New Psychology

What then is the New Psychology as applied to questions of racism and the problems of Negroes in our society? Our model has been the reevaluation of most of the research dealing with Negroes in terms of the possibility of the intrusion of an ethnocentric bias into the data gathering and interpretation of that data. The model rests on a need for greater description of Negro cultural and linguistic phenomena and a determination of the adequacy of fit--call it confrontation if you will--of the existing body of experimental data with these findings. The model also rests on a definition of racism not previously advanced, that is, racism is the denial

and/or denigration of cultural differences. Institutional racism, therefore, is the degree to which social policy is based upon psychological studies which deny those differences.

We feel strongly that this reevaluation of social science will provide the base for new and different research in the future. We also feel that if psychology is to be truly relevant it must begin to understand that it shares responsibility for white racism in this country in a most profound way. The way to correct this previous unconscionable direction of our thinking is not to stop all research, but once and for all to admit the legitimacy of a cultural system too long demeaned and obscured by ethnocentrism. Our call, therefore, is not for less but more research which will not only produce a better understanding of Negro culture but above all a better understanding of the process whereby a seemingly value-free methodology could produce gross distortions of the very subject matter of the methodology. Only when we have understood the culture of the Negro can we at all be in the position to suggest to society and its policy makers viable solutions to our current pressing concerns.

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